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**UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL**

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

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**ADDRESS TO:** Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
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**APPLICATION ELEMENTS**

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. X Fee Transmittal Form  
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. X Specification (Total Pages 29)  
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
  - Descriptive Title of the Invention
  - Cross References to Related Applications
  - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
  - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
  - Background of the Invention
  - Brief Summary of the Invention
  - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
  - Detailed Description
  - Claims
  - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. X Drawings(s) (35 USC 113) (Total Sheets 7)
4. X Oath or Declaration (Total Pages 5)
  - a. X Newly Executed (Original or Copy)
  - b.      Copy from a Prior Application (37 CFR 1.63(d))  
(for Continuation/Divisional with Box 17 completed) (**Note Box 5 below**)
  - i.      DELETIONS OF INVENTOR(S) Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5.      Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)  
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.
6.      Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

7.        Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission  
(if applicable, all necessary)  
a.        Computer Readable Copy  
b.        Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)  
c.        Statement verifying identity of above copies

**ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS**

8.   X   Assignment Papers (cover sheet & documents(s))  
9.   X   a. 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement (where there is an assignee)  
  X   b. Power of Attorney  
10.        English Translation Document (if applicable)  
11.        a. Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449  
       b. Copies of IDS Citations  
12.        Preliminary Amendment  
13.   X   Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) (Should be specifically itemized)  
14.        a. Small Entity Statement(s)  
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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

FOR

**FAST PROGRAM MODE**

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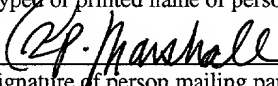
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## **FAST PROGRAM MODE**

### **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates generally to the field of computers and computer systems. More particularly, the present invention relates to a fast program mode for flash  
5 memory.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Many of today's computing applications such as cellular phones, digital cameras, and personal computers, use nonvolatile memories to store data or code. Nonvolatility is advantageous because it allows the computing system to retain its data and code even  
10 when power is removed from the computing system. Thus if the system is turned off or if there is a power failure, there is no loss of code or data.

One example of a nonvolatile memory device is the flash Electrically Erasable Programmable Read-only Memory (flash EEPROM or flash memory). Flash memory can be programmed by the user, and once programmed, the flash memory retains its data  
15 until the memory is erased. Electrical erasure of the flash memory erases the contents of the memory of the device in one relatively rapid operation. The flash memory may then be programmed with new code or data.

Flash memory customers often use programming equipment such as device programmers, automatic-test-equipment (ATE), and Joint Test Action Group (JTAG)  
20 programmers to program the memories. This equipment has hardware and software operating system overhead associated with sending programming information to the flash memory. The overhead, which provides time for the equipment to setup addresses and

control signals, can range from 12 microseconds ( $\mu$ s) to 180  $\mu$ s per byte/word or higher, depending on the equipment used.

Word or byte program operations in flash memory devices are typically executed by a multi-cycle command sequence. A 'Program Set-up' command is issued, followed by a second write that specifies the address and data. Control logic in the flash device, such as a Write State Machine (WSM), then takes over, controlling the program and program verify algorithms internally. While the WSM is working, the device can automatically enter 'Read Status Register' mode and remain there after the word/byte program is complete. The completion of the program event is indicated in status register. The status register can also indicate any errors.

**Figure 1** is flow diagram of typical program command sequence **100** of a prior art implementation. At step **110**, the user sends a program command ('Program Set-up') and a program address to the flash memory. The 'Program Set-Up' command sets the Command User Interface (CUI) into a state such that the next write will load the address and data registers. The program address is the memory location to which the user wishes to write. The control logic in the memory receives that information and configures itself for program mode. The next write to the flash memory device after the 'Program Set-Up' command will cause the logic to latch the address and data and to begin the program algorithm. Then at step **120**, the user sends the program data and the program address again. The control logic takes the data and program address and performs the program operation at the appropriate address in the memory array. The flash device switches to a read status mode where the device can output status register data. The user queries the

status register at step **130**. If the status register indicates that the program operation is not done, then the user waits and continues to poll the status register value. If the status register indicates that the program operation is done at step **130**, the user can also check to see if the program was successful at step **140**. For example, one possible cause of an unsuccessful program is incorrect program voltage. At step **150**, the user decides whether there are more addresses to program. If there are, then the steps **110** through **150** have to be repeated.

**Figure 2** is a timing diagram **200** showing the relationship between the signals used in connection with the prior art program command sequence of **Figure 1**. The timing diagram **200** includes six separate program sequences **210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260**. For this example, each program operation **210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260** programs data to a different program address. In order to understand the operation of the program sequence **100** of **Figure 1**, the operation of a single program operation **220** including the time periods T4, T5, and T6 will be discussed. **Figure 2** shows the signals referred to as ADDRESS **202**, WRITE ENABLE **204**, DATA **206**, and STATUS **208** associated with the program sequence **100**.

At time T4, the flash memory device is set up for programming as described above at step **110** of **Figure 1**. Program address PA **221** is sent on the address bus ADDRESS **202** to the memory. The program command **225** is sent on the data bus DATA **206** to the control logic on the flash device. When the user is driving the program command **225** and the desired program address PA **221**, WRITE ENABLE **204** is toggled. The WRITE ENABLE pulse **223** initiates the program and informs the control

logic that an operation is requested. The control logic can read the command on DATA **206** and determine that a program is to occur at PA **221**. The control logic prepares the flash memory for a program operation.

Then at time T5, the user sends the program address **222** and program data **226** to the flash memory. For this example, the first program address **221** and the second program address **222** are the same. At time T6, the user toggles WRITE ENABLE **204**. This WRITE ENABLE pulse **224** causes the actual program to occur. The control logic uses the program address **222** and the program data **226** to program the appropriate address in the memory array.

During time T6, the user also polls the value on STATUS **208** to check the progress of the program operation. When STATUS **208** pulses to a logic high value, the program of data **226** to address **222** is complete. Other values in STATUS **208** can indicate a program failure.

The other instances **210, 230, 240, 250, 260** of the program operation are conducted in a similar fashion as that of the above described operation **220**. Each program needs to have the program set up in order to a program an address. Hence, when more than one address location needs to be programmed, the program set up has to be repeated for each program operation. The signal setup time can become quite burdensome. A large amount of the time may not be consumed by the actual programming of the memory cells, but in setting up the memory device to enter program mode. Such overhead costs time and money to manufacturers and users.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

A method of programming a memory is described. The method of one embodiment calls for sending a command to a memory device. The command requests the memory device to enter a program mode. A confirmation of the command is sent. A first address is sent to the memory device. A first packet of data is also sent to the memory device. The first packet of data is to be programmed at the first address. A first write signal is sent to the memory device. A second packet of data is sent to the memory device. A second write signal is sent to the memory device.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the accompanying drawings and from the detailed description that follow below.



## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

The present invention is illustrated by way of example and not limitations in the figures of the accompanying drawings, in which like references indicate similar elements, and in which:

5           **Figure 1** is a flow diagram of a typical program command sequence of a prior art implementation;

**Figure 2** is a timing diagram showing the relationship between the signals used in connection with the prior art program command sequence of **Figure 1**;

**Figure 3** is an example of a cellular telephone using a flash memory device;

10          **Figure 4** is one embodiment of a system for performing on-board programming of a flash memory;

**Figure 5** is one embodiment of a system for performing off-board programming of a flash memory device;

**Figure 6** is a flow diagram of a fast program command sequence of one  
15          embodiment; and

**Figure 7** is a timing diagram showing the relationship between the signals used in connection with the fast program command sequence of **Figure 6**.

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

A method for a fast program mode is disclosed. The described fast program mode is used to program and update code and/or data in nonvolatile writable memory, but is not so limited. Although the following embodiments are described with reference to  
5 nonvolatile writable memories and flash memory, other embodiments are applicable to other type of memory devices. The same techniques and teachings of the present invention can easily be applied to other types of circuits or semiconductor devices that have program operations or code/data updates.

Flash memories are often used in handheld computers and similar devices as both  
10 read only memory and as long term storage which may be both read and written. One feature of flash memory is the ability to be programmed, erased, and later reprogrammed. The memory can be programmed by a manufacturer with certain code or data at the factory. If the information changes or needs to be updated, a user can erase the existing information and store new information.

15 Furthermore, the block architecture of certain flash devices allows a user to erase and update only certain blocks or the entire chip. However, if a user wanted to program the entire memory space of a large flash memory device such as a 16 or 32 megabit part, writing the entire memory array can take a long time. Programming time is also an issue for manufacturers since programming time directly affects product costs. The longer it  
20 takes to program devices, the greater manufacturing costs.

Improving the programming command sequence can lead to improved programming times. This can provide quicker programming throughput that can lead to

savings in time and money in the manufacturing flow. Manufacturers and consumers often need to write a large amount of data to sequential addresses. These consecutive program addresses present an opportunity to optimize the program operation. By reducing the signal setup required for consecutive program operations, program time can  
5 be reduced overall.

Embodiments of the fast program mode can facilitate an improvement in programming times. The fast program mode of the present invention bypasses the programmer system overhead by managing some of the address and control signals internally in the flash memory. This fast program mode provides a way to program flash  
10 memories quicker than existing programming methods via silicon enhancements. Other embodiments can provide an increase in clock frequency such that overall manufacturing throughput and efficiency are improved.

Referring now to **Figure 3**, there is an example of a cellular telephone **300** using a flash memory device **310**. The cellular telephone **300** shown in **Figure 3** is a digital  
15 phone capable of Internet access. For example, a user can download and receive information from the Internet via cellular access. This cellular phone **300** can be a Personal Communications Service (PCS) phone using digital cellular technology such as Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA), Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA), or Global System for Mobile (GSM) Communications. Similarly, flash memory can also be  
20 used in analog type cellular phones. Thus, the present invention is not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software.

Flash memory **310** and a processor **330** are located within cellular phone **300**.

Flash memory **310** has been designed to include a fast program mode. Processor **330** can be an embedded processor or a digital signal processing (DSP) chip. The phone **300** of **Figure 3** also includes a access port **320**. Access port **320** can be used to physically link the phone **300** to an external system for code and/or data update. For instance, the flash memory can be updated through the access port interface or through a download via cellular transmission.

A memory update via the access port **320** is an example of an in-system write. In-system write utilizes the system processor **330** to execute flash memory erase and program algorithms. An engineer creates erase, program and verify algorithms and then downloads these algorithms into the system random access memory (RAM). The processor **330** executes the algorithms and ports code to the flash memory **310** for updates. In-system write is also a way to perform PC BIOS code updates.

The present invention is not limited to cellular phones. Alternative embodiments of the present invention can be used in other types of devices such as handheld devices and embedded applications. Some examples of handheld devices include Internet Protocol devices, digital cameras, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and handheld PCs. Embedded applications can include a microcontroller, a digital signal processor (DSP), system on a chip, network computers (NetPC), set-top boxes, network hubs, wide area network (WAN) switches, or any other system which uses flash memory for other embodiments. Flash memory is also used in personal computers (PC) and other computer systems.

For another embodiment of a system, one implementation of a memory including

a fast program mode can be used with a system on a chip. One embodiment of a system on a chip comprises of a processor and a memory. The memory for one system is a flash memory. The flash memory can be located on the same die as the processor and other system components. Additionally, other logic blocks such as a memory controller or graphics controller can also be located on a system on a chip. By including one embodiment of the present invention on the system on a chip, the flash memory can be updated quickly and with minimal inconvenience to a user.

There are a number of ways in which manufacturers can program flash memories. Typical solutions include on-board programming and off-board programming. On-board programming (OBP) loads code/data into the flash memory component after the device has already been mounted onto the printed circuit board (PCB). There are multiple methods to perform OBP. OBP methods include using Automatic-Test-Equipment (ATE), IEEE 1149.1 Joint Test Action Group (JTAG) test access port (TAP), in-circuit programming, and in-system write.

Off-board programming means that operators load code/data into individual memory components away from the product assembly and test processes. Manufacturers then mount the pre-programmed components on PCBs. Off-board programming equipment ranges from device programmers to automatic handling systems. Typically equipment operators manage product flow through off-board programmers. Off-board programming can include the use of an engineering programmer, a production programmer, or a Automated Programming System.

In response to consumer electronic demands, flash memory package sizes

continue to get smaller and smaller. With the shrinking flash memory package, OBP is an appealing method to load code into the flash memory component. OBP allows for hands-free programming. Manufacturers use surface mount assembly equipment to mount blank flash memory components on the PCB. Once mounted, OBP provides

5 hands-free programming. But in order to perform OBP, the test equipment needs to be able to access all of the flash memory component's pins. This method works well if there is sufficient area on the PCB to connect to all flash memory pins. In other cases, where PCB component pins are inaccessible, serial OBP is an option.

JTAG programming is one type of OBP. JTAG is one solution for products that

10 do not have enough space available on the PCB to connect a tester interface to every flash memory pin. The JTAG TAP provides the capability to program flash memory mounted on the PCB. To perform JTAG programming you need to connect a JTAG compliant device to all of the flash memory pins.

Many cellular telephone manufacturers use JTAG programming to load code into

15 the flash memory component. Cellular telephone PCBs are so small that other OBP methods that require access to all the flash memory pins would be difficult to accomplish. Because JTAG uses a serial interface, this OBP method utilizes little PCB area and fits the needs of space-constrained products. In order to perform OBP, cellular telephone manufacturers use the four-wire JTAG interface. These manufacturers load code into the

20 flash memory component on millions of telephones per year.

**Figure 4** is one embodiment of a system for performing on-board programming of a flash memory **460**. The environment **400** of **Figure 4** includes a computer system

**410** and a system PCB **430**. System PCB **430** includes a JTAG compliant device **440** coupled to a memory **460**. The computer **410** is coupled to the system PCB **430** via a JTAG interface **420**. Communication with the JTAG compliant device **440** is performed through a hardware controller that either inserts into a PC add-in card slot on the

5 computer **410** or by using a stand-alone programmer.

The JTAG compliant device **440** includes an instruction register **442**, a boundary-scan register (BSR) **444**, and a test access port (TAP) **446**. The TAP controller **446** provides access to many of the test support functions built into the JTAG compliant device **440**. The TAP **446** is a state machine that controls all operations for one JTAG

10 compliant device **440**. A single cell of a shift-register is designed into the logic of the JTAG compliant device **440**. Every digital pin of the memory **460** is coupled to its own shift register cell. This single cell, known as the boundary-scan cell (BSC), links the JTAG circuitry to the memory's internal core logic. All BSCs of a particular circuit constitute the BSR **444**. BSR logic becomes active when performing JTAG testing

15 The JTAG compliant device **440** connects to all flash memory address data, and control signals **450**, **452**, **454**. The flash memory **460** does not need to be JTAG compliant for this programming method to function. The JTAG hardware controller sends commands and data to the JTAG compliant device **440** which then propagates the information to the flash memory **460** for programming.

20 JTAG hardware controllers provide a communication link with any JTAG compliant device. A manufacturer can create software to perform OBP programming functions. Some type of program is often used to control the programming operation

through the computer **410**. The program can offer users a simpler interface to accessing the memory **460** without having to remember all the necessary signal timing. So if a person desired to perform OBP via the JTAG TAP using the fast program mode with a memory **460** capable of such a programming mode, the person may need to write the software routines and program necessary to enable the computer **410** or stand-alone programmer. The program code of such routines can be stored in the computer memory of the system **410** or on magnetic disk media.

Although this example describes the storage of program code in computer memory and on magnetic disk media, program code can be stored on other forms of a machine-readable medium. Some machine-readable mediums for storing program code include optical storage media, flash memory devices, PC Cards, etc. Similarly, program code can also be distributed by way of other machine readable mediums. For instance, a computer program may be distributed through a machine readable medium such as a floppy disk, a CD ROM, a carrier wave, or even a transmission over the internet.

Thus, a machine-readable medium can include any mechanism for storing or transmitting information in a form readable by a machine (e.g., a computer). For example, a machine-readable medium can include a read only memory (ROM), random access memory (RAM), magnetic disk storage media, optical storage media, flash memory devices, and electrical, optical, acoustical or other forms of propagated signals (e.g., carrier waves, infrared signals, digital signals, etc.).

Another method for programming flash memory devices involves the use of off-board programmers. Manufacturers use off-board programmers to load code into



individual flash memory components before mounting the components on the PCB.

Engineering programmers drive erase, program, and verify signals to individual flash memory components. Engineers typically use device programmers during the prototype stage to load code into the flash memory component. In this stage of product development, code frequently changes. Because of these changes engineers need easy access to the flash memory component. Engineers often mount the flash memory component in a socket on the prototype PCB. They can then remove the flash memory component from the socket, reprogram it in the engineering programmer, and then reinstall the component into the socket to test the latest revision of code.

Production programmers provide capability to load code into many components simultaneously. There are two types of production programmers: gang and concurrent. Some gang programmers can load code/data into 8, 10, 16, or 20 flash memory components at one time. The number of components depends on the number of sockets the programmer supports. Gang programmers often support manufacturing environments where high volume programming is required. Because these programmers support manufacturing operations, manufacturers pay close attention to programming times. Concurrent programmers are similar to gang programmers. They also support multiple sockets. One difference between a concurrent programmer and a gang programmer is that the concurrent programmer programs each socket individually.

**Figure 5** is one embodiment of a system for performing off-board programming of a flash memory device. The environment **500** of **Figure 5** includes a computer system **510** and a programmer **530**. The computer system **510** and the programmer **530** are

coupled together in this embodiment via a parallel or serial cable **520**. For an alternative embodiment, the programmer can be a stand-alone programmer that does not require the assistance of a computer **510**. The programmer **530** of this embodiment includes a plurality of sockets **540** into which flash memory components can be inserted for programming. This embodiment also includes a user interface **560**. The interface **560** has a keypad and a display through which a user can perform program, erase, and read operations on components in sockets **540**. User interface **560** is coupled to the sockets via cables and wires **550**.

Although the above examples describe programming flash memory components with off-board programmers and on-board programmers, it will be evident that alternate embodiments of the present invention can be included in other systems. For example, memory devices can also be programmed with a system such as a computer system, PDA, cellular phone, set-top box, or network hub having an implementation of the present invention.

Referring now to **Figure 6**, there is a flow diagram **600** of a fast program command sequence of one embodiment. At step **610**, the user sends a fast program mode command ('Fast Program Mode') and a program address to the flash memory. For this embodiment, the user also sends a 'Fast Program Mode' confirmation command at step **615** to confirm that the mode is to be entered. The 'Fast Program Mode' and 'Fast Program Mode' confirmation commands cause the component to configure itself for receiving a series of data packets and to program these packets to sequential memory locations. This start address is latched within the component. The start program address

is the first memory location to which the user wishes to write.

Unlike prior art flash memory devices, this embodiment of the fast program mode of the present invention automatically outputs the contents from a status register in the flash memory device to a designated output pin. Prior art flash devices require the user to perform some operation to read the contents of a status register. Performing that status operation consumed additional time, thus slowing the program process. By automatically outputting the status of the program operation in the fast program mode of the present invention, some time is saved.

At step **620**, the user polls a status pin to determine whether the component has entered the fast program mode and ready to start receiving data. For this embodiment, the status value is outputted to a single status pin. Alternate embodiments of the present invention can output status values to multiple pins. If the flash device is ready at step **630**, then the user can proceed to send program data. But if the flash device is not yet ready, the user should wait and continue to poll the status pin.

If the component is ready to receive data, then the user sends a first data packet at step **640**. Data packets sent to the component in later program operations following the first one will be programmed at the next byte or word location following the starting address. A write enable pulse to the flash component at step **650** causes the actual program algorithm to occur. The internal flash control logic also increments this latched address to point to the next byte or word location for each successive write. Each time a write enable signal is sent to the flash component, logic in the flash device latches the data and programs that data to the incremented address location in the memory array.

As the control logic in the flash device is performing the program operation in the memory array, the user can poll a status pin at step **660**. If the value on the status pin indicates that the program operation is not done yet at step **670**, then the user waits and continues to poll the status pin value at step **660**. If the status value indicates that the program operation is done, the user can either terminate the fast program mode or send the next packet of data to be programmed.

If the user has finished programming all the data or wants to terminate the fast program mode, the externally supplied address value that is driven to the flash component is changed to a value other than that of the first program address. Furthermore, the data value driven on the data bus to the component is changed to all 1's (or 0xFFFF in this example). Upon the next write enable pulse at step **680**, the control logic in the flash device will read this new address and data. When the logic decodes this information, the logic determines that the mode should be terminated. But if the user wants to continue programming data, the user should keep driving the first address on the address bus to the component and simply send new program data at step **640**. The next write enable pulse **650** will cause the new data to be programmed at the next sequential address in the memory array. Steps **640** through **680** are repeated until the all desired sequential programming operations are done.

For another embodiment of the fast program mode, the mode can be designed to get the code or data into the flash memory as quickly as possible. Therefore, no internal data integrity checking within the flash device occurs in this mode. When the fast program mode is finished, the user can performed an external verify to check that the data

was properly programmed into the flash memory. If the verify operation finds an error then the fast program mode can be re-entered and the memory location that failed can be reprogrammed.

**Figure 7** is a timing diagram showing the relationship between the signals used in connection with the fast program command sequence of **Figure 6**. The waveforms shown include address signals **702**, a write enable signal **704**, data signals **706**, and status indicator **708**. The timing diagram **700** shows sixteen program operations **710, 720, 730, 732, 734, 736, 738, 740, 742, 744, 746, 748, 750, 752, 754, 756**. Operation **758** is a fast program mode termination command. For this example, these sixteen program operations **710, 720, 730, 732, 734, 736, 738, 740, 742, 744, 746, 748, 750, 752, 754, 756** occur at sequential addresses in the memory array. In order to understand the operation of the program sequences on timing diagram **700** of **Figure 7**, the operation of three program operations **710, 720, 730** including the time periods T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5 will be discussed.

At time T1, the flash memory device is set up for a fast program mode as described at step **610** of **Figure 6**. Program address PA **711** is sent on the address bus ADDRESS **702** to the memory. PA **711** is the starting address at which the first piece of data is programmed. Subsequent data packets will be programmed at byte or word increments from the starting address PA **711**. The fast program mode command **712** is sent on the data bus DATA **706** to the control logic on the flash device. When the user is driving the fast program mode command **712** and the starting program address PA **711**, WRITE ENABLE **704** is toggled. The WRITE ENABLE pulse **713** informs the control

logic that an operation is requested. The control logic decodes the command on DATA 706 and determines that a fast program is to occur at starting address PA 711. The control logic prepares the flash component to become configured for a fast program mode.

5           At time T2, the user issues a fast program mode confirmation command to enter into the fast program mode. The confirmation command in this example is a WRITE ENABLE pulse 714 on WRITE ENABLE 704 and the fast program mode confirmation command 716 on DATA 706. The user also continues to send starting address PA 711. For this embodiment, the starting address PA 711 has to be driven on ADDRESS 702 for  
10   the entire period during which the user wants to remain in the fast program mode.

          The user queries STATUS 708 during time T2 to find out if the component has entered the fast program mode and is ready for programming to commence. The logic high 718 on STATUS indicates that the device is ready.

          At the end of time T2, the user sends the data 717 to be programmed at PA 711.

15       At time T3, the user toggles WRITE ENABLE 704. This WRITE ENABLE pulse 715 causes the actual program to occur. The control logic in the flash device uses PA 711 and data 717 to program the appropriate address in the memory array. The user polls the value on STATUS 708 to check the progress of the program operation. When STATUS 708 pulses to a logic high value 719, the program of data 717 to address PA 711 is  
20   complete. For this embodiment, the first program operation took three time period T1 through T3.

          This example embodiment refers to pulses on WRITE ENABLE 704 and

STATUS **708**. However, the use of pulses is not required for alternative embodiments of the present invention. For example, the signals can be driven to certain levels and held there instead of being pulsed.

At T4, a pulse **721** on WRITE ENABLE **704** causes the logic to read the  
5 information on ADDRESS **702** and DATA **706**. If the address is still PA **711**, then the logic determines that the fast program mode is to be maintained and data **722** is to be programmed at the next consecutive byte or word address subsequent to PA **711**.

The fast program mode of one embodiment uses the flash memory's internal write state machine (WSM) to automatically increment addresses during programming. The  
10 WSM can also manage the flash memory control signals chip enable, output enable, and others. For this embodiment, logic in the component stores the starting address in a register internally. The logic increments the address to determine the next consecutive address for the subsequent program operation. The logic uses this calculated address to program the memory array with data **722**. Upon completion of the memory write, the  
15 component issues a pulse **723** on STATUS **708**. The component is ready to receive new data or a termination command. Thus for this embodiment, a complete program operation has been accomplished during one time period T4.

At T5, WRITE ENABLE pulse **724** causes the logic to read the information on ADDRESS **702** and DATA **706**. If data **725** is not equal to all 1's (0xFFFF in this  
20 example) and the address is still PA **711**, then the logic determines that the fast program mode is to be maintained and data **722** is to be programmed at the next consecutive byte or word address subsequent to the address used to program data **722** during time T4. The

logic uses this newly calculated address to program the memory array with data **725**.

Upon completion of the memory write, the component issues a pulse **726** on STATUS **708**. The component is again ready to receive new data or a termination command. This program of data **725** has been completed in one time period T5.

5           The example embodiments described above include the use of pulses on certain signal lines such as WRITE ENABLE 704 and STATUS 708. However, alternative implementations of flash memories having embodiments of the present invention can use levels on signal lines instead of pulses. For example, certain NOR type flash memory parts include status levels on signal lines. The host machine or user polls the status pins  
10   on the flash device for a level. When the user sees a predetermined level on the signal, the user resumes some other action.

A comparison of the method of the present invention and that of the typical prior art discloses the difference in time requirements. The prior art method of **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** needs a minimum of three bus cycles for each program operation. A host  
15   typically has to poll the flash part more than one to get the status. So three complete program operations required nine clock periods. But for this embodiment of the present invention, the first program operation needed three bus cycles. Subsequent program operations in this embodiment of the present invention only took one bus cycle each to complete. So a system using an embodiment of the present invention can have three  
20   program operations completed in five time periods. This is a savings of four clock periods. The larger the block of data that is used to program with the fast program mode, the greater the time savings over the prior art method.



Referring now to time period T19, the user terminates the fast program mode. For this embodiment, driving an address **727** different from the starting address PA **711** together with all 1's (0xFFFF **729** in this example) on DATA **706**. The logic reads the values on ADDRESS **702** and DATA **706** when the user issues the WRITE ENABLE pulse **728**. The logic terminates the fast program mode.

Although the value used on DATA **706** to indicate termination of the fast program mode for this embodiment is a value of all 1's, alternative implementations of the present invention can include values of all 0's or some other predetermined combination.

Eliminating the requirements for the programming equipment to manage addresses and control signals inherently allows quicker programming times. For instance, a theoretical example of improved programming times is described. A 32 megabit memory part can store 2,048,000 words of data. If a programmer takes 57  $\mu$ s to program one word, then the total time needed to program the entire memory array is  $2,048,000 \times 57 \mu\text{S} = \text{one minute and 55 seconds}$ . But if the average time needed to program a word of data in a fast program mode is 25  $\mu$ s, then the total time needed to program the same part with the same programmer is  $2,048,000 \times 25 \mu\text{S} = 51 \text{ seconds}$ . Considering the vast number of programmers available today, programming times can be significantly improved with the fast program mode because of the slow operating system overhead associated with many programmers.

In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments thereof. It will, however, be evident that various modifications and changes may be made thereof without departing from the broader spirit

and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims. The specification and drawings are, accordingly, to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of programming a memory comprising:  
sending a command to a memory device, said command requesting said memory device to enter a program mode;  
sending a first address to said memory device;  
sending a first packet of data to said memory device, said first packet of data to be programmed at said first address;  
sending a first write signal to said memory device;  
sending a second packet of data to said memory device; and  
sending a second write signal to said memory device.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said command is a fast program mode command.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising sending a confirmation of said command.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said first address is a starting address.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said memory device is a flash memory.
6. The method of claim 1 further comprising sending a termination sequence to exit said program mode.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein said termination sequence comprises sending a data packet comprising all 1's to said memory device.
8. The method of claim 6 wherein said termination sequence comprises sending a second address to said memory device, wherein second address is different from said first

address.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein said termination sequence comprises sending a second address to said memory device, wherein said second address is the same as said first address.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein said first address is sent to said memory device as long as said memory device is in program mode.
11. The method of claim 1 further comprising polling a pin on said memory device to determine a status.
12. A method of writing data comprising:
  - receiving a command in a memory device, said command requesting said memory device to enter a program mode;
  - receiving a first address in said memory device;
  - receiving a first packet of data, said first packet of data to be programmed at said first address;
  - receiving a write signal;
  - programming said first packet of data to said first address;
  - incrementing said first address to a second address, said second address sequential to said first address;
  - receiving a second packet of data;
  - receiving a second write signal; and
  - programming said second packet of data at said second address.
13. The method of claim 12 wherein said command is a fast program mode command.

14. The method of claim 12 further comprising receiving a confirmation of said command.
15. The method of claim 12 wherein said first address is a starting address.
16. The method of claim 12 wherein said memory device is a flash memory.
17. The method of claim 12 further comprising receiving a termination sequence to exit said program mode.
18. The method of claim 17 wherein said termination sequence comprises receiving a data packet comprising all 1's.
19. The method of claim 17 wherein said termination sequence comprises receiving an new address in said memory device, wherein said new address is different from said first address.
20. The method of claim 12 wherein said command is received in control logic within said memory device.
21. The method of claim 20 wherein said control logic is a write state machine.
22. The method of claim 20 wherein said command causes said control logic to program data at sequential addresses in said memory device.
23. The method of claim 12 further comprising sending a status value from within said memory device to an output pin on said memory device.
24. An apparatus for programming a memory comprising:  
a socket to receive a memory device, said memory device having a fast program mode; and  
control logic coupled to said socket, said control logic to send code to said socket

to be programmed in said memory device coupled to said socket.

25. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein said memory device is a flash memory.
26. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein said fast program mode comprises receiving one address and a plurality of data packets.
27. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein said control logic polls a pin on said memory device for a status value.
28. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein said apparatus is a programmer.
29. A memory device comprising:
  - control logic to perform program operations in said memory device, said control logic having a fast program mode wherein said control logic receives one address value and a plurality of data packets;
  - a data bus coupled to said control logic;
  - an address bus coupled to said control logic;
  - a plurality of control signals coupled to said control logic; and
  - a memory array coupled to said control logic.
30. The memory device of claim 29 wherein said memory device is a flash memory.
31. The memory device of claim 29 further comprising a pin coupled to said control logic, said control logic sending a status value to said pin.
32. A machine readable medium having embodied thereon a computer program, the computer program being executable by a machine to perform a method comprising:
  - sending a command to a memory device, said command requesting said memory device to enter a program mode;

sending a first address to said memory device;  
sending a first packet of data to said memory device, said first packet of data to be programmed at said first address;  
sending a first write signal to said memory device;  
sending a second packet of data to said memory device; and  
sending a second write signal to said memory device.

33. The machine readable medium of claim 32 further comprising sending a confirmation of said command.

34. The machine readable medium of claim 32 further comprising sending a termination sequence to exit said program mode.

35. A computer system comprising:  
a processor;  
a bus coupled to said processor;  
a user interface coupled to said bus; and  
a socket coupled to said bus, said socket to receive a memory device having a fast program mode.

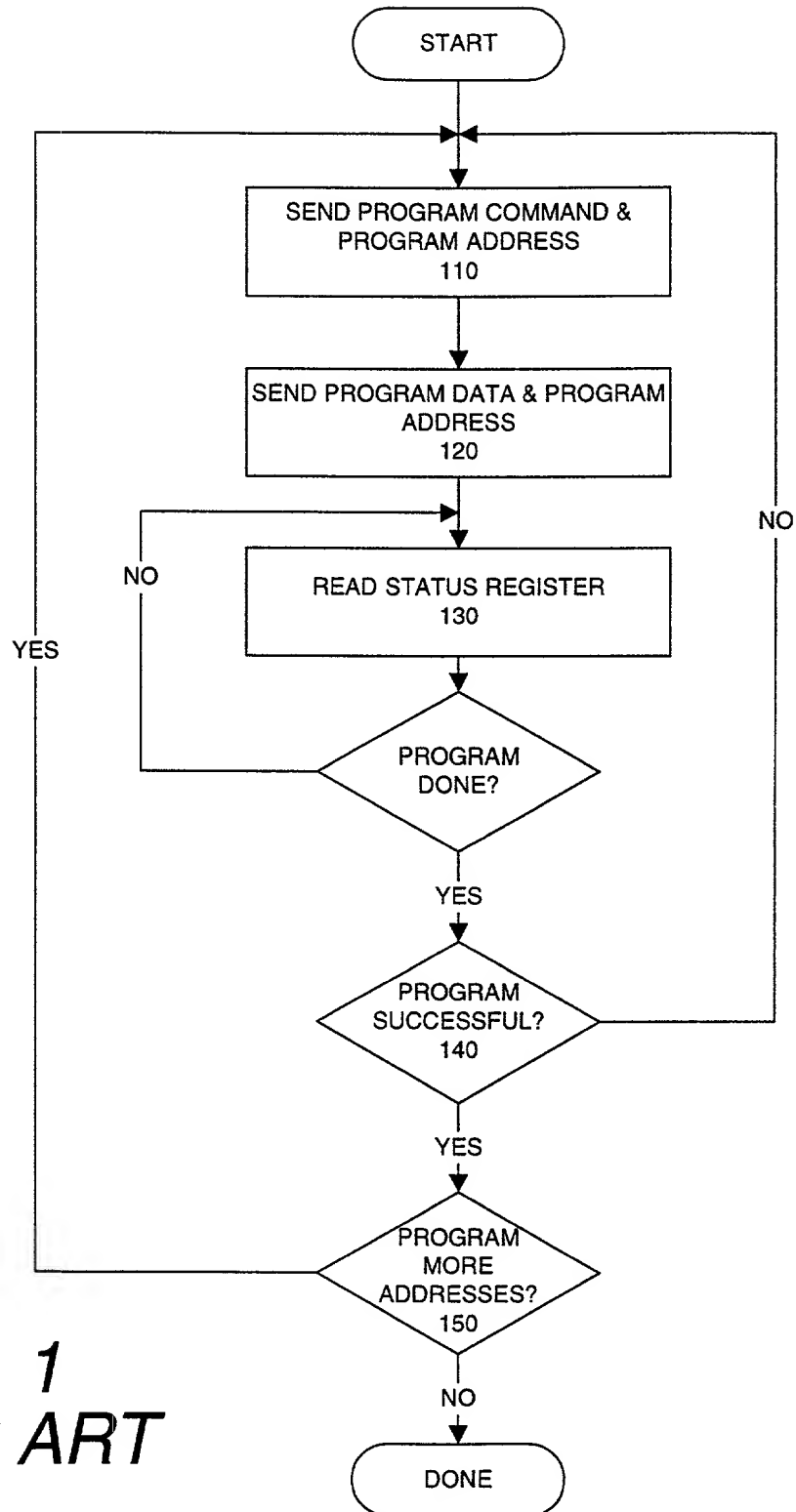
36. The computer system of claim 35 wherein said processor sends code to said memory device to be programmed.

37. The computer system of claim 35 wherein said memory device is a flash memory.

## **ABSTRACT**

A method of programming a memory. The method of one embodiment calls for sending a command to a memory device. The command requests the memory device to enter a program mode. A confirmation of the command is sent. A first address is sent to the memory device. A first packet of data is also sent to the memory device. The first packet of data is to be programmed at the first address. A first write signal is sent to the memory device. A second packet of data is sent to the memory device. A second write signal is sent to the memory device.





**FIG. 1**  
**PRIOR ART**

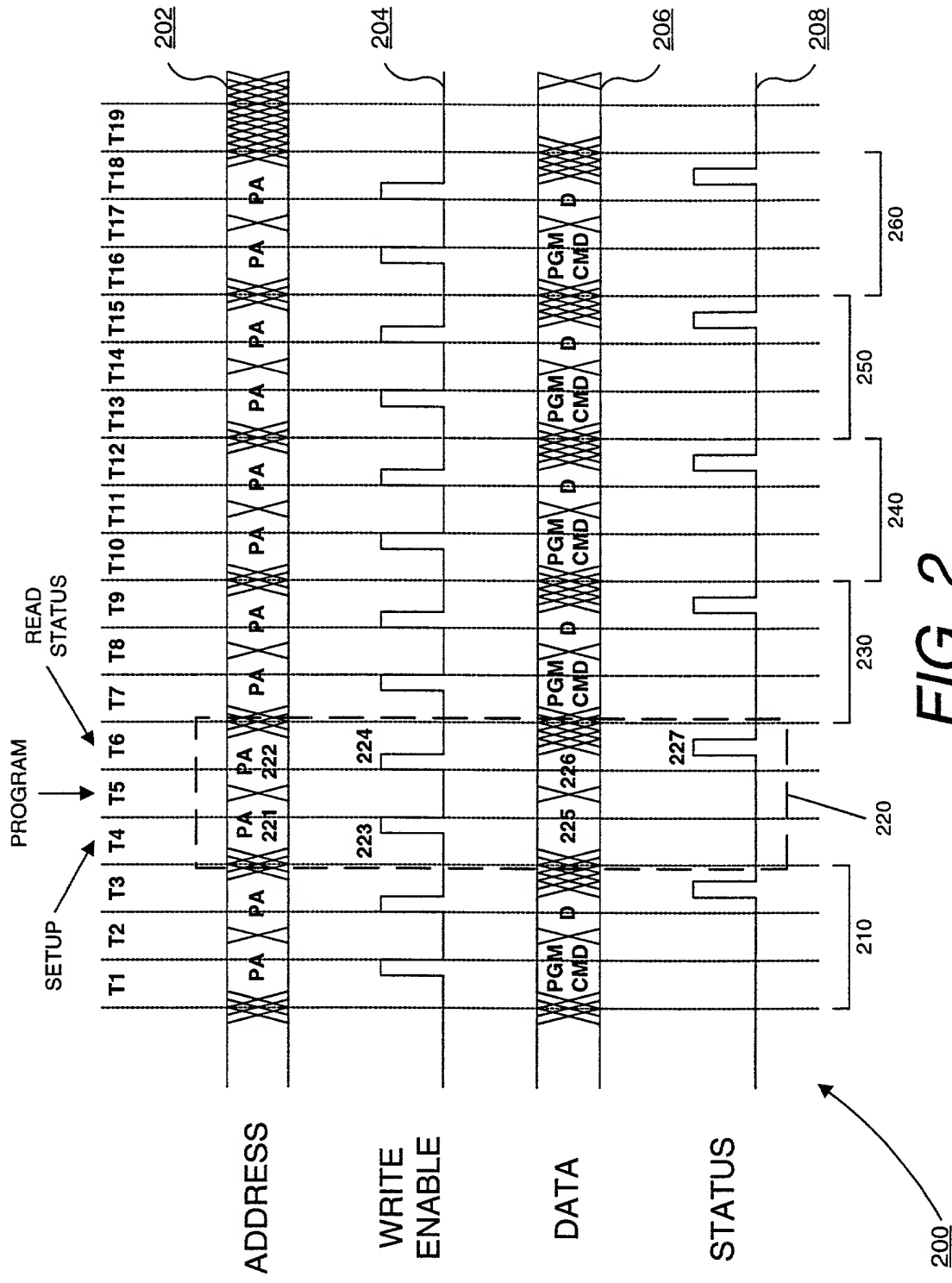
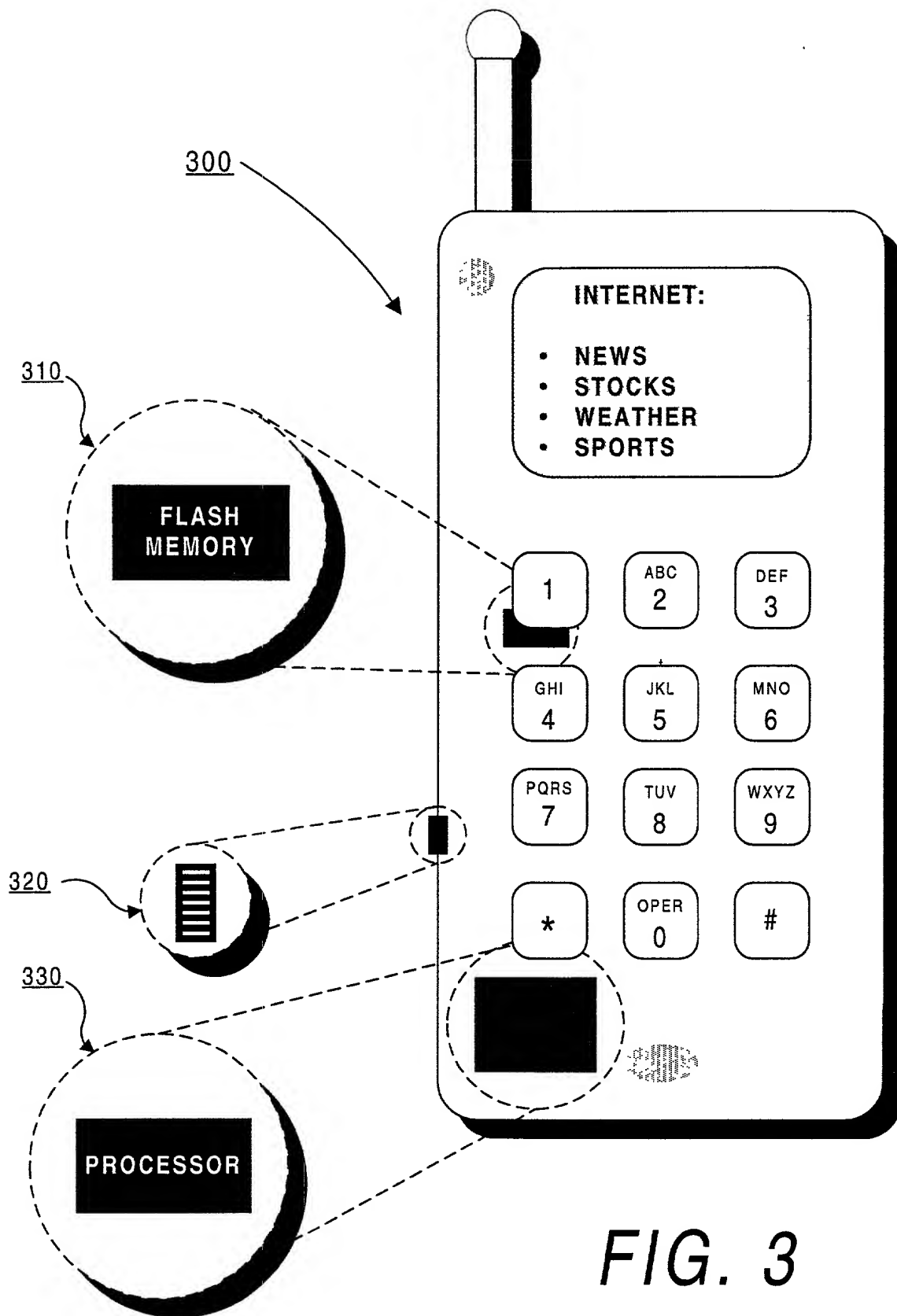
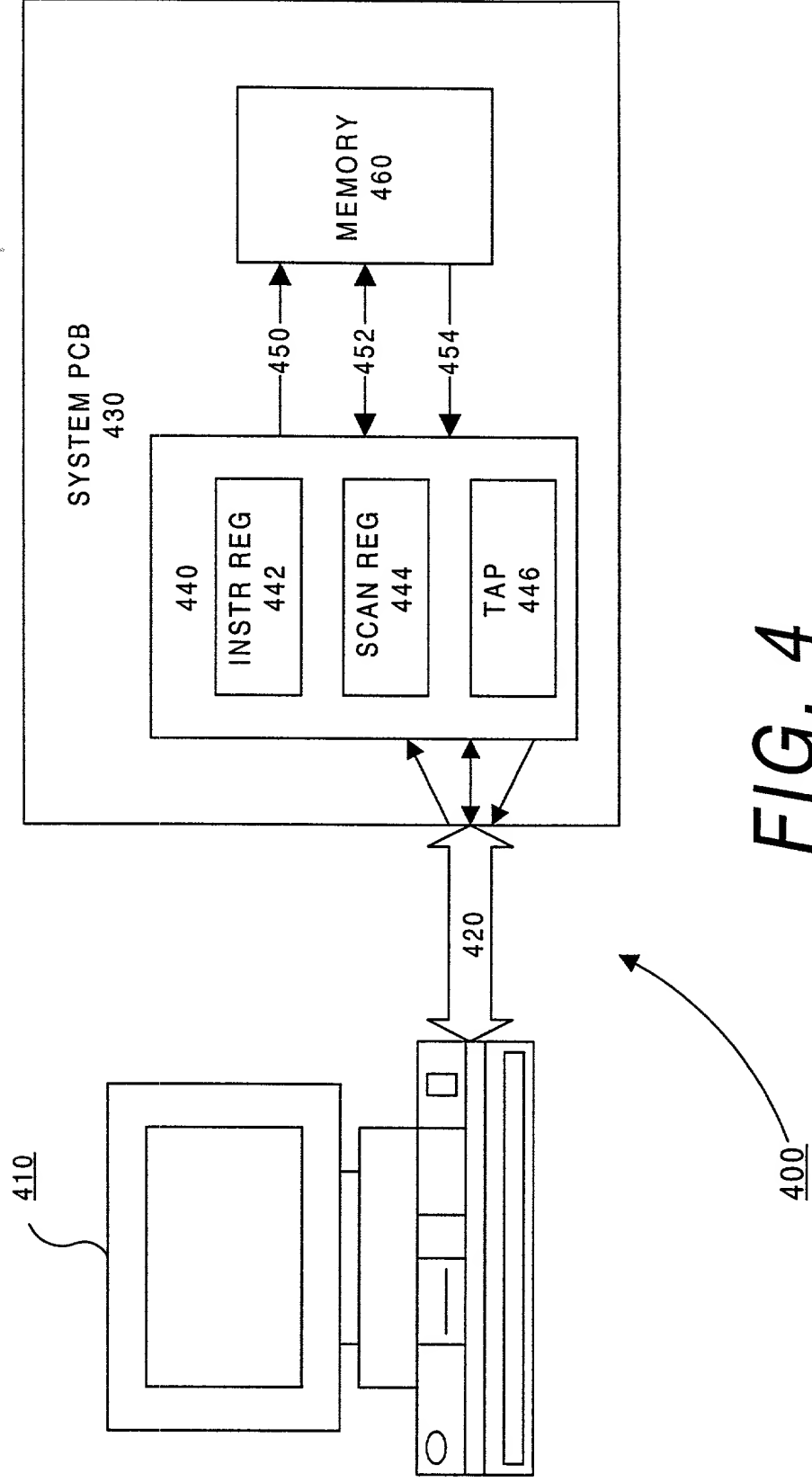


FIG. 2  
PRIOR ART





**FIG. 4**

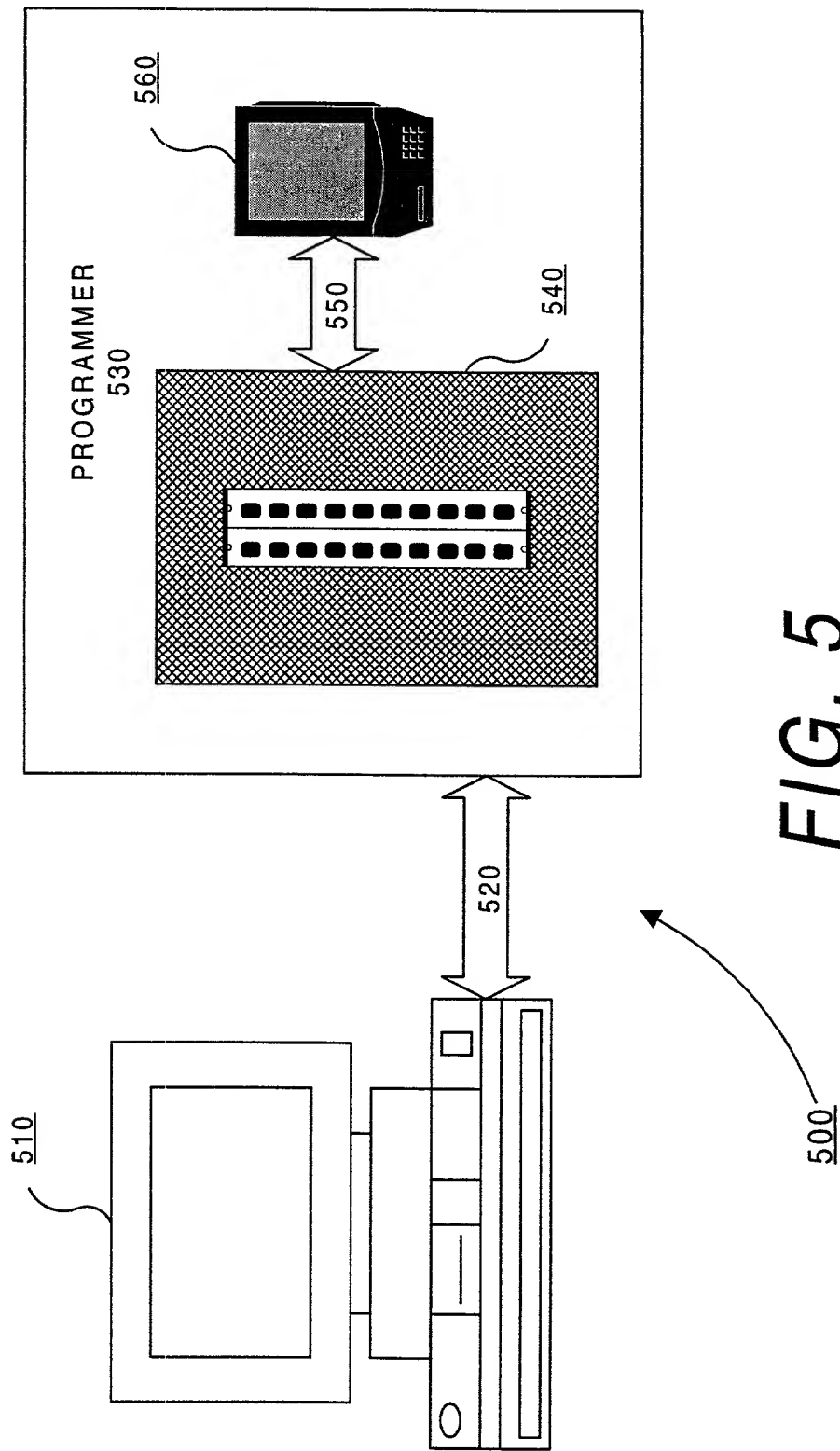
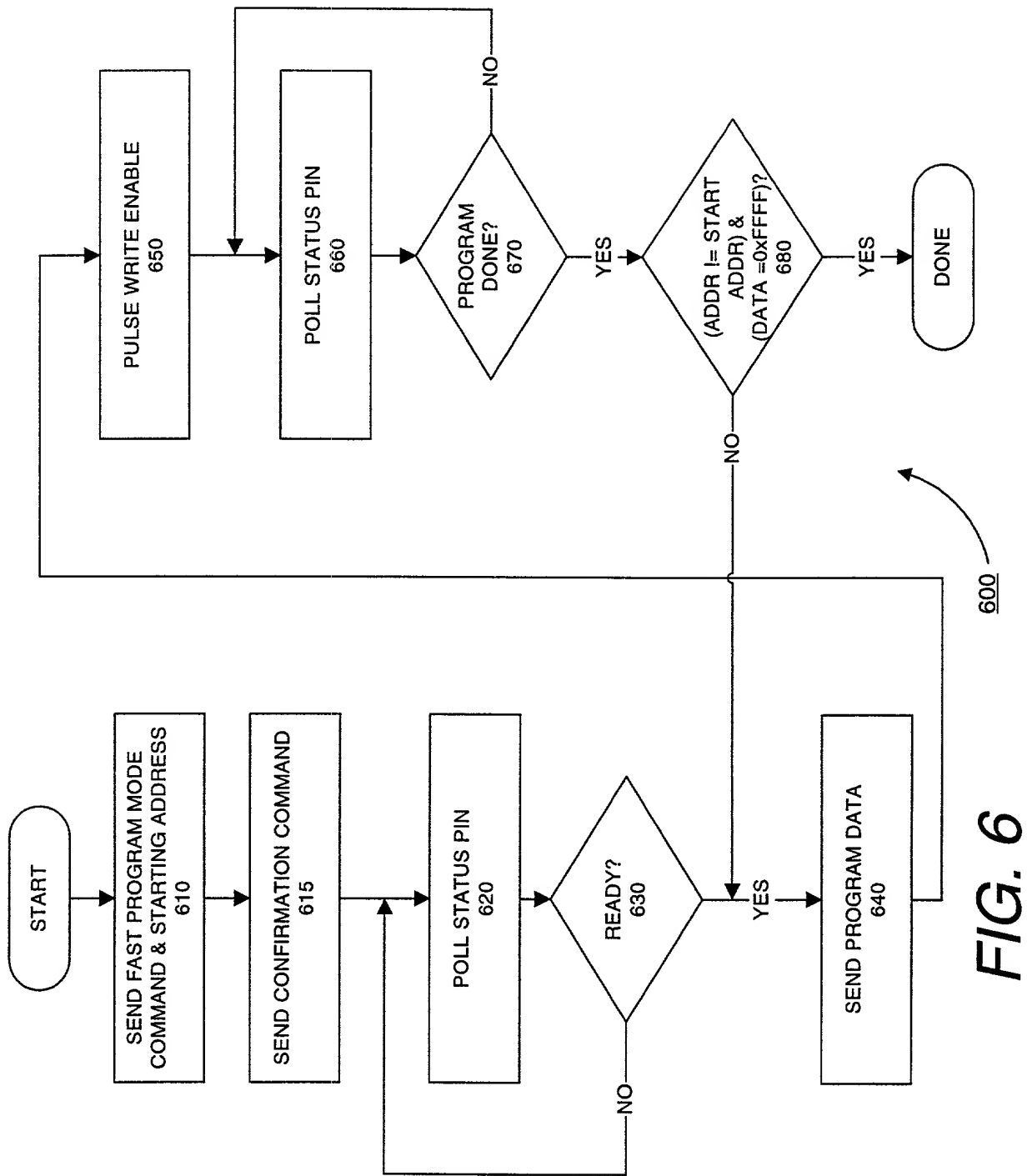


FIG. 5



**FIG. 6**

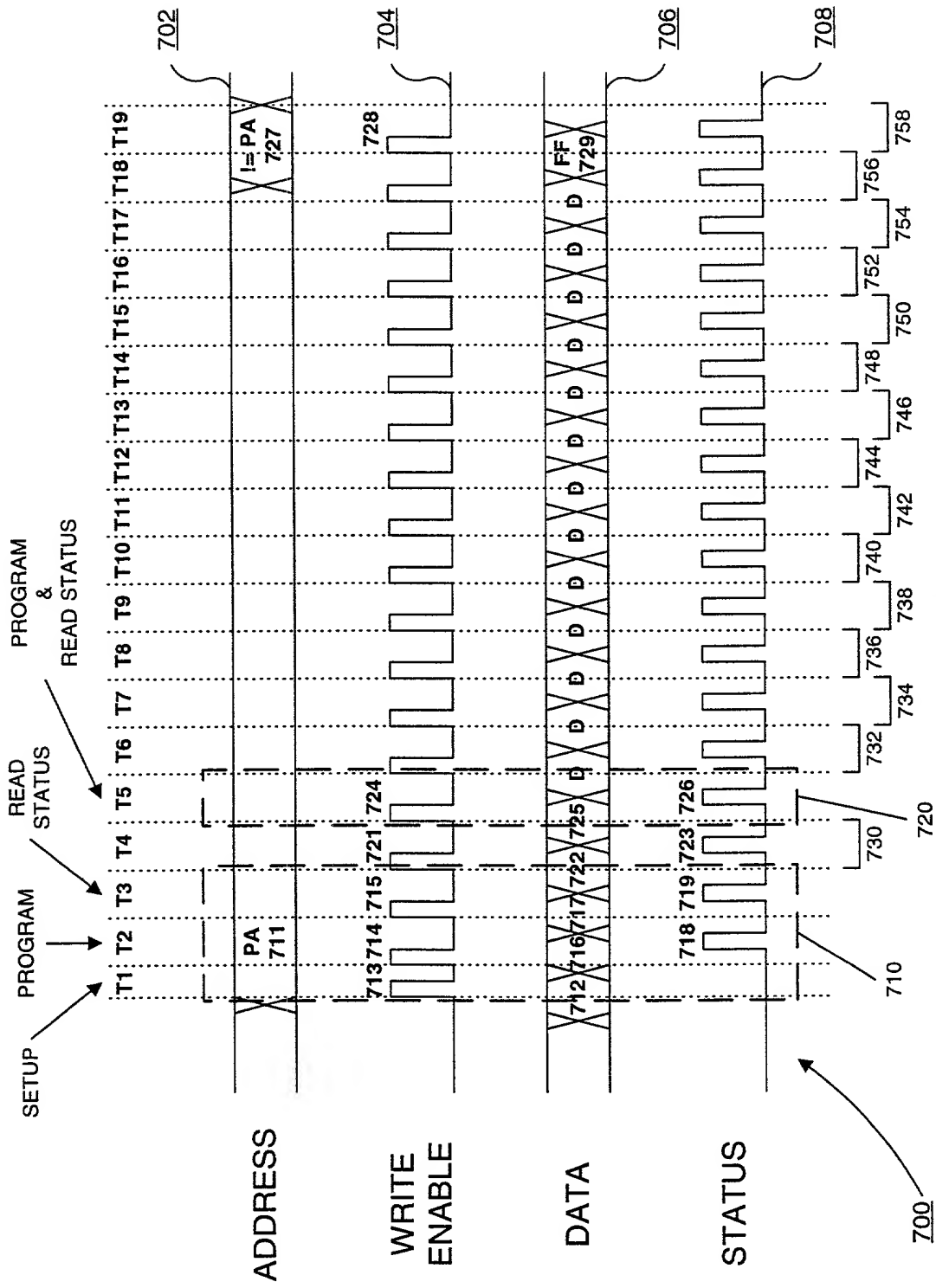


FIG. 7

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

I believe I am the original, first, and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first, and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

## FAST PROGRAM MODE

  x   is attached hereto.  
\_\_\_\_\_ was filed on \_\_\_\_\_ as  
United States Application Number \_\_\_\_\_  
or PCT International Application Number \_\_\_\_\_  
and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_  

(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claim(s), as amended by any amendment referred to above. I do not know and do not believe that the claimed invention was ever known or used in the United States of America before my invention thereof, or patented or described in any printed publication in any country before my invention thereof or more than one year prior to this application, that the same was not in public use or on sale in the United States of America more than one year prior to this application, and that the invention has not been patented or made the subject of an inventor's certificate issued before the date of this application in any country foreign to the United States of America on an application filed by me or my legal representatives or assigns more than twelve months (for a utility patent application) or six months (for a design patent application) prior to this application.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d), of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

"Express Mail" mailing label number: EL43189112TUS

Date of Deposit: December 15, 1999

I hereby certify that I am causing this paper or fee to be deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service on the date indicated above and that this paper or fee has been addressed to the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231

CHRISTOPHER P. MARSHALL  
(Typed or printed name of person mailing paper or fee)

(Signature of person mailing paper or fee)

Date signed) 2/5/99

-1-



Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority  
Claimed

_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
_____ (Number)	_____ (Country)	_____ (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

_____ Application Number	_____ Filing Date
_____ Application Number	_____ Filing Date

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

_____ Application Number	_____ Filing Date	_____ Status -- patented, pending, abandoned
_____ Application Number	_____ Filing Date	_____ Status -- patented, pending, abandoned

I hereby appoint the persons listed on Appendix A hereto (which is incorporated by reference and a part of this document) as my respective patent attorneys and patent agents, with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith.

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(Name of Attorney or Agent)  
ZAFMAN LLP, 12400 Wilshire Boulevard 7th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90025 and direct  
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(Name of Attorney or Agent)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Inventor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Residence \_\_\_\_\_ Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_  
(City, State) (Country)

Post Office Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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## APPENDIX A

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## APPENDIX B

### Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 Duty to Disclose Information Material to Patentability

(a) A patent by its very nature is affected with a public interest. The public interest is best served, and the most effective patent examination occurs when, at the time an application is being examined, the Office is aware of and evaluates the teachings of all information material to patentability. Each individual associated with the filing and prosecution of a patent application has a duty of candor and good faith in dealing with the Office, which includes a duty to disclose to the Office all information known to that individual to be material to patentability as defined in this section. The duty to disclose information exists with respect to each pending claim until the claim is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration, or the application becomes abandoned. Information material to the patentability of a claim that is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration need not be submitted if the information is not material to the patentability of any claim remaining under consideration in the application. There is no duty to submit information which is not material to the patentability of any existing claim. The duty to disclose all information known to be material to patentability is deemed to be satisfied if all information known to be material to patentability of any claim issued in a patent was cited by the Office or submitted to the Office in the manner prescribed by §§1.97(b)-(d) and 1.98. However, no patent will be granted on an application in connection with which fraud on the Office was practiced or attempted or the duty of disclosure was violated through bad faith or intentional misconduct. The Office encourages applicants to carefully examine:

- (1) Prior art cited in search reports of a foreign patent office in a counterpart application, and
  - (2) The closest information over which individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application believe any pending claim patentably defines, to make sure that any material information contained therein is disclosed to the Office.
- (b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and
- (1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim; or
  - (2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:
    - (i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or
    - (ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A prima facie case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

(c) Individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application within the meaning of this section are:

- (1) Each inventor named in the application;
  - (2) Each attorney or agent who prepares or prosecutes the application; and
  - (3) Every other person who is substantively involved in the preparation or prosecution of the application and who is associated with the inventor, with the assignee or with anyone to whom there is an obligation to assign the application.
- (d) Individuals other than the attorney, agent or inventor may comply with this section by disclosing information to the attorney, agent, or inventor.